

## **Senate Joint Resolution No. 3**

### **RESOLUTION CHAPTER 136**

Senate Joint Resolution No. 3—Relative to the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program.

[Filed with Secretary of State September 18, 2003.]

#### **LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST**

SJR 3, Alarcon. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program.

This measure would, among other things, urge the Congress of the United States to increase TANF block grant funding to certain states, allow states to use TANF funds to provide an additional 24 months of TANF eligibility for families who have used 60 months of TANF eligibility, consider “stopping the clock” on TANF assistance for recipients who are meeting work participation requirements or live in counties with high unemployment rates, increase funding for the Child Care and Development Block Grant, and give states flexibility to design the most effective strategies to help people secure jobs.

WHEREAS, In 1996, the federal government restructured the nation’s safety net for poor families, replacing the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program with the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant program in an attempt to better transition families toward self-reliance; and

WHEREAS, The new welfare law imposed a 60-month time limit on the receipt of federally funded cash assistance, allowing only 20 percent of a state’s cases to be exempted for “hardship” reasons; and

WHEREAS, In response to the 1996 federal changes, California enacted the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) program in 1997, which limits adults, but not children, to 60 cumulative months of cash assistance, with designated exceptions for those unable to work; and

WHEREAS, As many as 15,700 recipients were estimated to have reached the CalWORKs five-year limit on January 1, 2003, with more recipients expected to reach the limit throughout 2003 and beyond; and

WHEREAS, Working parents, most in low-paying jobs with few opportunities for self-sufficiency, make up a majority of those who will reach the time limit; and

WHEREAS, In many counties, a majority or near majority of parents reaching the time limit are married as well as working, contradicting the



stereotypes of idle single parents that underlay the creation of time limits; and

WHEREAS, The termination of cash assistance will increase hardships for families, including hunger and the inability to meet housing costs; and

WHEREAS, The deepening economic crisis reflected in the decline in the stock market has caused a severe reduction in revenues that threatens vital services for the poor, including subsidized child care; and

WHEREAS, California's unemployment rate is at 6.4 percent, making it even more difficult for workers eligible for TANF benefits to obtain more gainful employment in the near future; and

WHEREAS, Studies of welfare "leavers" show that leaving welfare usually does not mean living in self-sufficiency; and

WHEREAS, The TANF block grant, as enacted in 1996, expired on September 30, 2002, but has been temporarily extended by Congress until June 30, 2003; and

WHEREAS, Congress is now considering reauthorization of the TANF block grant as well as the level of, and rules governing, federal funding; and

WHEREAS, The Legislative Analyst has concluded that the reauthorization legislation passed by the United States House of Representatives would result in added costs to CalWORKs of \$2.15 billion over five years, mostly for child care and employment services; and

WHEREAS, H.R. 4, the reauthorization legislation passed by the United States House of Representatives, provides no additional TANF block grant funding, and an insufficient amount in child care and development funds to meet anticipated demands; now, therefore, be it

*Resolved by the Senate and Assembly of the State of California, jointly,* That the Legislature of the State of California recognizes California's pending economic crisis and that reductions in TANF funding will further exacerbate economic hardships to working families; and be it further

*Resolved,* That the Legislature of the State of California recognizes that retention of time limits on TANF assistance to needy families will not only worsen California's economy, but the economies of other states as well; and be it further

*Resolved,* That the Legislature of the State of California urges the Congress of the United States to do all of the following:

(1) Increase TANF block grant funding to states that, like California, are facing severe shortfalls in their ability to adequately fund services and benefits for low-income families.



(2) Allow states to use TANF funds to provide an additional 24 months of TANF eligibility for families who have used 60 months of TANF eligibility.

(3) Consider “stopping the clock” on TANF assistance for recipients who are meeting work participation requirements or who live in counties with high unemployment rates.

(4) Increase funding for the Child Care and Development Block Grant to cover any additional demands for child care created by TANF reauthorization and to expand access to low-income families who are financially eligible for subsidized care but denied assistance due to a shortage of resources.

(5) Give states flexibility to design the most effective strategies, including education and vocational training, to help people secure jobs leading to self-sufficiency; and be it further

*Resolved*, That the Secretary of the Senate transmit copies of this resolution to the President and Vice President of the United States, to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, to the Majority Leader of the Senate, and to each Senator and Representative from California in the Congress of the United States.

